

## THE CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, COX GREEN

### PCC Policy and Procedure - Responding to Safeguarding Concerns & Allegations

Here at the Church of the Good Shepherd, we take the Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults very seriously. *We will respond promptly to every Safeguarding concern or allegation following the procedure outlined in the Church of England's Safeguarding Handbook:*

#### **What to do if you are concerned about a child or adult and/or you are concerned that a church officer may be abusing a child or adult**

If you have a concern that a child or adult is or may be being abused, or that a church officer (or other adult) is or may be abusing a child or adult.

1. Respond well to the victim/survivor, if it is a direct disclosure, to ensure they feel listened to and taken seriously. Explain what will happen next and check out support requirements. They should be informed that their identity and the identity of the respondent will be shared with key church officers, and may be shared with the statutory agencies, if there is any current risk to children or adults. The concern or allegation should not be shared with anyone other than those who need to know (e.g. the statutory agencies and appropriate church officers).

2. **Emergency:** If you believe a child or adult is in immediate danger of significant or serious harm, contact the emergency services on 999.

3. **Non-emergency:** Contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer or incumbent, in the first instance. They **must** then contact the DSA. If neither are available, contact the DSA directly. If the concern arises in an activity, discuss with the group/activity leader, who will contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer or incumbent.

*The following process would usually be carried out by the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Incumbent*

4. Any safeguarding concerns must be reported to the DSA within 24 hours.

5. If the PSO/incumbent or the DSA are not available within 24 hours, contact Children's Social Care or Adult Social Care and/or the police directly, if the concern is that a child or adult is being abused. Contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and/or police if the concern is that a church officer may be abusing a child or adult. Advise the Parish Safeguarding Officer or incumbent as soon as possible that you have made a referral; they will advise the DSA.

#### **If in doubt don't delay – seek advice from statutory agencies.**

6. Do not contact the respondent or anyone who may be implicated in the allegation or disclosure, even if they would normally be contacted as part of the procedure, until advice has been sought from the DSA or statutory agencies.

7. Record the details of the concern or allegation. Where it is not appropriate to take notes at the time (usually it will not be), make a written record as soon as possible afterwards or before the end of the day. Record the time, date, location, persons present and how the concern or allegation was received, e.g. by telephone, face-to-face conversation, letter, etc. The record should include details of information provided to that person as well as the information received. Always sign and date the record. Keep it factual. Pass on a copy to the DSA (and/or the PSO/incumbent). The records should be kept secure and confidential.

#### **If the concern is about a child or adult:**

8. The DSA will act in line with the House of Bishops' guidance. They will offer advice, support and guidance and help to make the required referrals. If there is a risk of harm, the concerns must be reported to the statutory agencies within 24 hours of the DSA receiving the concerns. This would be Children's or Adult Social Care and/or the police. There should be close communication between the DSA and PSO/incumbent until the situation is resolved. The archdeacon should also be informed.

#### **If the concern also involves a church officer:**

9. The DSA will act in line with the House of Bishops' guidance. They will offer advice, support and guidance and refer the concerns to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and/or police within 24 hours. The DSA will now take over the management of the safeguarding concern in conjunction with the core group (which will be convened within 48 hours) and statutory agencies. There may also be a requirement for parish representatives to attend a subsequent core group/s. If there are doubts about whether or not to make a referral and under what route, the DSA will seek advice from the LADO.

Please note that the procedure is the same for non-recent abuse.

**A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and adults, and respecting the rights of the person against whom an allegation is made. In such circumstances the welfare of the child, young person or adult must come first. The rights of the person against whom the allegation is made are important and must be given due weight, once the immediate safety and protection of the child, young person or vulnerable adult have been assured.**

